



Department of Health  
Agency of Human Services



# Vermont Wins Four of the Nation's Top Five Loving Support Awards of Excellence



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BURLINGTON –Vermont nearly swept the first annual Loving Support Award of Excellence, winning four of the nation's five top honors (Gold Premiere), which recognizes state programs that champion peer counseling support for new breastfeeding mothers.

A total of 55 awards were given nationally, but only five WIC agencies in the nation received the top award. California was the only other state to win the Gold Premiere award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition.

Jessica LaClair, the senior breastfeeding peer counselor in the Burlington District Office, received the award on behalf of her district on Aug. 25 at the Health Department central office.

"Breastfeeding is lifesaving and most mothers want to breastfeed their newborn," LaClair said. "Breastfeeding can be hard at first, and mothers need someone to talk to who can provide evidenced-based information and support. I'm happy that I can provide that support for WIC moms and babies."

Peer Counselors make a difference in the lives of mothers and their newborn babies. Without breastfeeding support at critical periods, many mothers do not continue to breastfeed, even though they desire to do so for a year or more, as recommended by their health care providers.

Having the support of a Breastfeeding Peer Counselor can make a difference and help mother reach their goals. Vermont has the highest exclusive breastfeeding rates in the nation (2014) with 90 percent initiation, 66.5 percent breastfeeding at six months, 60.5 percent at 3 months, and nearly 30 percent at six months.

For more information on the benefits of breastfeeding and local resources for nursing mothers, visit [healthvermont.gov](http://healthvermont.gov)

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